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RUF Rt12 R

STILL WANT THAT GT2 RS?



MARATHON DE LA ROUTE

RETRACING THE 911 R'S
EPIC NÜRBURGRING RACE
IN PORSCHE'S 911 TURBO S

ALSO INSIDE

914-6 v 911

'70s CLASSICS DO BATTLE

2011 TOUR AUTO

ON TOUR WITH EUROPE'S FINEST

911 RESTORATION

ONE MAN'S DREAM MEETS REALITY

904 GTS v CAYMAN R



AN INDEPENDENT PUBLICATION



WORTH ITS WEIGHT IN GOLD

The Ruf Rt12 R is the maddest, baddest 997-based driving car Ruf has built. And it offers a priceless supercar experience.

Story: Stuart Gallagher Photography: Andrew Morgan



Second gear, 60km/h, deserted stretch of German B-road running to the horizon, or it could be an A-road as its condition is far superior to anything the UK has to offer when it comes to road surfaces. Either way, now seems like a good opportunity to do as invited and bury the right pedal into the bulkhead.

Back in 2001 when the 996 Turbo was the new kid on the block, its performance felt out of this world. With next to no turbo lag to wait for, it would take off with such violence and accelerative forces that you couldn't envisage a 911 being any quicker in straight line, or across country. Then the original widow-maker demonstrated that a factory 911 was capable of forcing your eyeballs to the back of your head. And what it lacked in 911 agility, the GT2 made up for with its lung crushing thrust. It's been a similar story with each successive water-cooled and turbocharged 911: the performance has increased to such a level you can't imagine a 911 going any quicker. But quicker each incarnation is, currently culminating in the GT2 RS, a factory 911 that requires you to have a stern word with yourself both before and after a stint behind its Alcantara-covered steering wheel. The first RS-badged 911 GT2 is not only the most powerful 911 the factory has built, but its mix of power, torque and surprising usability and composure (once you've had your little chat) marks it as one of the stand out cars in the company's illustrious past.

Ruf looked at the GT2 RS as a mere stepping stone to its golden child that's about to reboot my idea of a 'quick' 911. The experience of a GT2

RS fills you with a false sense of what is about to take place when an Rt12 R's throttle is fully opened. The RS squats its tail, gives a little squirm from the rear tyres and there's a lightening of the nose as the chassis gets down to the serious business of managing forward trajectory. This R makes that RS feel like a Carrera.

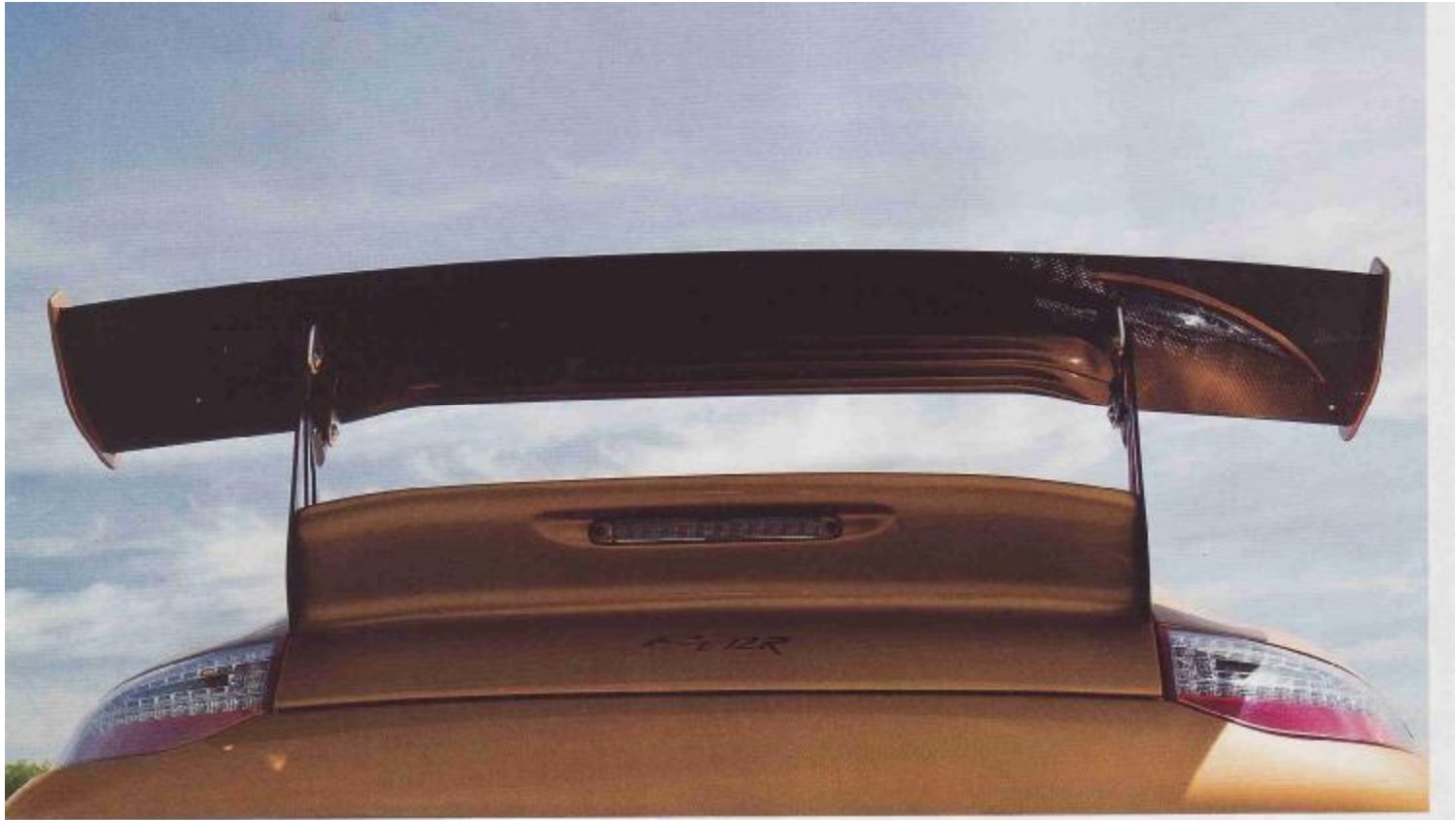
Back to the throttle pedal-meet bulkhead scenario. Jesus. There is GT2 RS quick and then there is the Rt12 R. So much happens it takes a second or two for your brain to catch up with what your senses are telling it. The nose rises like a big-engined power boat getting up on the plane, the steering goes light, the front Michelin Cups sniff out a flat surface to gather up the lost traction – did I mention the R is four-wheel drive? God only knows how severe a case of lack-of-imagination-if-it-all-goes-wrong you must suffer from to order a rear-wheel drive version. The sensation is the closest I think I will ever get to being a human cannonball. Although I suspect the R is quicker.

So rapid is the R that the first time you unleash it your brain makes you lift for a split second in order for you get your bearings. Like the first time you twist the throttle on a motorbike fitted with a proper engine, say a 600cc, and discover it's not going to be as easy as it looks. Third gear in the R has the same effect on your internal organs as second did, but you're acutely aware that you're travelling quicker still. Too quick? A short-shift into fourth saves the embarrassment of slamming into the limiter but has seemingly no effect on the accelerative pace of Alois Ruf's latest creation. Fifth and sixth can

*There is GT2 RS quick
and then there is the Rt12 R*







wait, at the moment Germany doesn't feel big enough to let the R off its leash in its top two gears. So, on first acquaintances I'll admit the R's performance is verging on the scary.

What is the Rt12 R? It's the third variant of Ruf's twin-turbocharged, 997-based range-topper, a series that started with the 650hp, 223mph Rt12 in 2005, was joined in 2009 by the 685hp Rt12 S and is now topped by the R, a 730hp, 693lb ft, 230mph 911 that weighs just 125kg more than a GT2 RS but produces an additional 110hp and 177lb ft of torque. No wonder it feels like it wants to take off when you swallow deep and pluck up the courage to see what it's got in the first three gears.

Order your R with four-wheel drive – and with the R capable of breaking the traction of all four driven wheels in fourth gear, you have to question the sanity of anyone who goes down the rear-drive route – and your Rt12 R starts as a 997

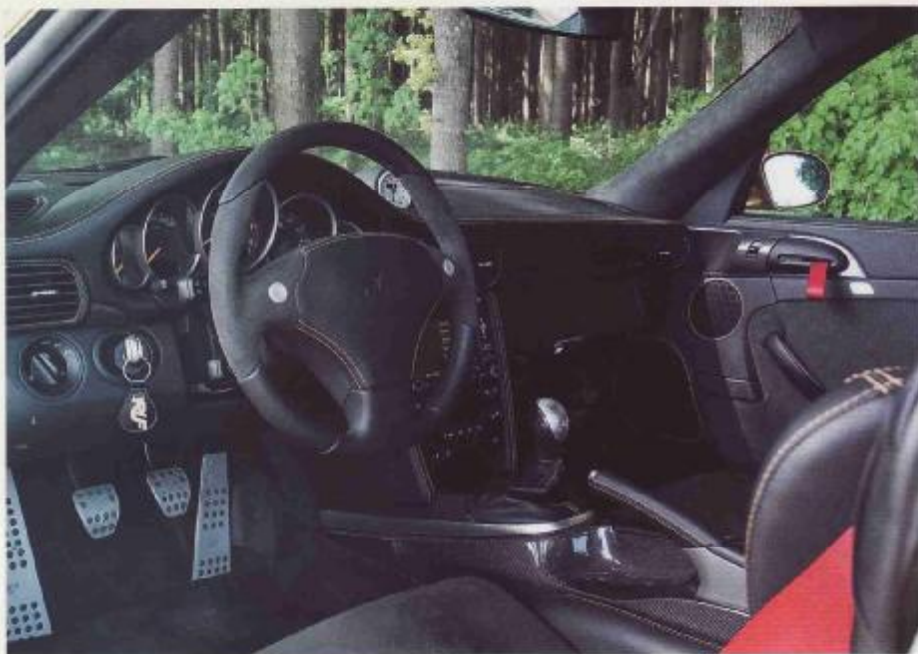
Turbo (go rear-wheel drive and Ruf will start with a GT2). The first stage is to remove just about everything aside from the wiring loom and any bits that don't need upgraded or will get in the way of the build. With a naked shell, Ruf's integrated roll-cage is the first job on the list, a process the company has been carrying out since it built the legendary CTR Yellowbird in 1987 and one that, once fitted, is only noticeable by the slightly thicker Alcantara-trimmed pillars. External bodywork changes include swapping the aluminium front luggage lid for a carbon fibre item, with the same material used for the front wings, that also have a more pronounced 'arch' to them, in a nod to 911's of yesteryear. The doors remain the aluminium items, but the interior trim is lighter and there's less of it. The rear spoiler is carbon fibre too, and those of you with a keen eye will spot it bears a remarkable resemblance to that found on the back of a GT3 Cup car.

Beneath that rear wing resides the R's potent heart. It starts life as a 3.8-litre, twin-turbocharged 997 Turbo motor, but the factory-supplied turbos, with their variable turbine geometry technology, are ditched in favour of a pair of conventional blowers running a maximum of 1.6bar of boost. The engine's internals remain intact from the factory, although Ruf goes to the precaution of taking the engine apart and inspecting it before programming the engine's ECU to deliver the required levels of performance.

On the dyno the flat-six achieves a 730hp peak at 7000rpm and 693lb ft of torque. These are, however, the 'minimum' figures the company quotes: "We say 730hp because this way we know every Rt12 R engine that leaves Pfaffenhausen will be developing at least 730hp," says Alois Ruf. "We have seen nearly 800hp on a number of occasions, so we're confident that when the

Getting to know the Rt12 R is an unfathomably cool way to explore some seriously quick roads





Without launch control, and with a manual gearbox, Ruf has recorded a 3.1-second 0-62mph time



customer collects their car they have at least 730hp at their disposal." Which is reassuring. And all that power and torque is fed through a standard six-speed manual gearbox, albeit with the top three ratios (fourth, fifth and sixth) shortened for optimum on-track performance rather than headline grabbing top speeds. Not that 230mph is too shabby.

This China-bound Rt12 R may be four-wheel drive but this doesn't mean Ruf hasn't tweaked with the car's chassis. The Porsche Traction Management four-wheel drive transmission remains, as do the car's standard PASM dampers, but in place of a 911 Turbo's standard PSM

traction and stability control setting, Ruf has utilised the independent, switchable Traction and Stability Controls functions found on a GT2. The brakes are Porsche's own PCCB items, recalibrated for the weight loss and alterations in weight distribution compared to the Turbo. The gorgeous five-spoke forged wheels feature centre-locking technology and are home to Michelin's Pilot Sport Cup tyre; "after three high-speed failures with Pirelli's P-Zero Corsa our test driver insisted we used the Michelin Cup," explains Ruf's affable spokesman Marc-André Pfeifer. It's feedback like this from test drivers that makes you thankful they're prepared to find these things out.

Despite a specification that suggests a 911 with all the ingredients to be a one-way ticket ride to oblivion, the Rt12 R is actually a remarkably simple car to get to know.

The interior, beautifully trimmed, dripping with bespoke details and a sense of occasion with Ruf's trademark green-on-black dials to keep an eye on, a thicker leather and Alcantara steering wheel to grip, and the company's distinctive aluminium pedals on which to control that fearsome motor with, you feel you can jump in and just drive. Which you can.

It takes a couple of extra spins of the starter to fire the flat-six into life and after a burst of revs it

RUF Rt12 R

Engine: 3800cc, six-cylinders horizontally-opposed, twin-turbocharged
Max power: 730hp @ 7000rpm
Peak torque: 693lb ft @ 3500rpm
Gearbox: Six-speed manual, four-wheel drive
Brakes: 380mm (front) and 350mm (rear) ventilated and drilled with six- (front) and four (rear)-piston aluminium callipers, ABS, PSM

Suspension: MacPherson struts, coil springs, TC and SC
Wheels & tyres: Front: 9x19-inch with 245/35ZR19 Michelin Pilot Sport Cup tyres. Rear: 12x19-inch with 325/30ZR19 with Michelin Pilot Sport Cup tyres
Weight: 1495kg
Top speed: 230mph
0-62mph: 3.1 seconds
Price new: £279,000 (plus taxes)



settles to a smooth, consistent idle. The clutch is GT2 RS heavy, although it doesn't take a shot putters thigh to operate and the shift action is more precise and smoother than Porsche's short-shift conversion.

While you wait for the fluids to warm through, particularly the engine's oil, stretching beyond 3500-4000rpm feels criminal when the golden nectar has yet to reach 90°C, getting to know the Rt12 R is an unfathomably cool way to explore some seriously quick and, crucially, deserted roads.

Build up slowly, an extra 500rpm at a time before taking another gear, riding the wave of

torque that peaks at a lowly 3500rpm and opening the door to that torrent of power. Even when short-shifting at 5500rpm the Rt12 R feels GT2 quick, hold on another 500rpm and you're into 2RS territory and you're still 1000rpm shy of the engine's peak power limit! It's when you first run through the power band from start to finish that the R hits you full on in the face with a punch of such violence a satellite TV channel could charge you to watch it. Second gear is the most explosive, over and done with in two, maybe three seconds max. Third lasts longer but is no less ferocious, while fourth sends you so far into the big numbers that it takes a couple of

attempts to build the confidence to run the engine to its peak. Without launch control, and with a manual gearbox Ruf has recorded a 3.1-second 0-62mph time.

The Rt12 R isn't purely about speed, however. It's compliant, responsive and a surprisingly benign 911 to pilot. It would benefit from the wider front track enjoyed by the GT3 and GT2 RS models, but the traditional 911 understeer when you turn-in is a good safety net to tell you to consider your entry speed. A less aggressive rear diff ratio would help here, but you'll probably be more grateful for a degree or more of adjustment from the rear axle when you

Every Ruf product we have ever tested has been a piece of automotive perfection



approach the limit, in lieu of a little push from the front in slower to medium turns. The four-wheel drive robs a degree of communication from the front axle too, but less so than it does in a regular Turbo or Turbo S, and when turned in the R grips and goes like very few 911s this side of the current RS line-up. While it has the ability to scare you, that is not in question, it's the overriding sense you get that it actually wants to work with you that leaves you hugely impressed. The series of S-bends we found on our test route demonstrated an impressive level of composure and surefootedness when it comes

to high-speed directional changes. With some time comes confidence, and with confidence comes the willingness to push the Ruf harder and climb deeper under skin to extract more from it. Forced induction-powered cars aren't meant to be this involving, are they?

It comes as no surprise to be bowled over by the Rt12 R. From the original Yellowbird to the R's slightly less demonic brother, the Rt12 S, every Ruf product we have ever tested has been a piece of automotive perfection. Ruf's models just look right; they are finished to an exacting standard you can only achieve when building a

car by hand and in such low numbers. Which brings us neatly on to the Rt12 R's price, all €279,000 (excluding taxes) of it. Expensive? Yes. But Ruf will only build 20 examples, less than ten per cent of the total production run for Porsche's 911 Sport Classic, its lowest volume production car to date.

Like every Ruf model since 1987, the Rt12 R is not a Porsche with a tuner's name stuck to its nose, but a fully-fledged, homologated production car with its own Ruf chassis number. Exclusivity comes at a price, and with the Rt12 R it's a price worth paying ◯

